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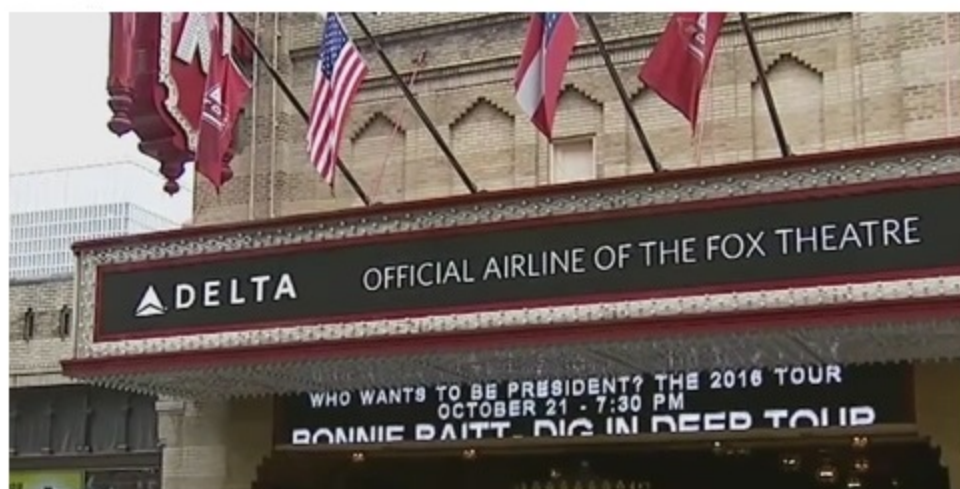
Delta to end sponsorship of Fox Theatre over Qatar Airways event with JLo

Kelly Yamanouchi

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Delta Air Lines will not renew its sponsorship of Atlanta's Fox Theatre, due to a foreign rival airline's event Tuesday night at the venue featuring a private concert by Jennifer Lopez.

It's not JLo that prompted the move by Delta. The issue is that the event Tuesday night is hosted by Delta nemesis Qatar Airways.



Delta has been in a war of words with Qatar Airways for a year and a half over the issue of government subsidies and airline competition.

Qatar Airways has been rapidly expanding around the world and on June 1 starts service in Atlanta with flights to Doha. The event with JLo at the Fox will celebrate the coming launch of the new route.

And with that, the fight got personal.

Delta, a sponsor of the Fox for more than 20 years, said it will not renew its sponsorship of the storied Atlanta theater after their contract expires May 31, 2017.

Delta's chief legal officer Peter Carter said the reason can be traced back to a harsh comment Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker made about Delta.

"When the CEO of Qatar first told the world that they would be flying to Atlanta, what he told the world was that he was going to start a flight from Doha to Atlanta... to rub salt in the wounds of Delta," Carter said. "So we were very surprised and disappointed when we learned that the Fox Theatre — an organization that we've supported for years, an organization that has called us its official airline — we were shocked and surprised when we learned that they were hosting the coming out party for Qatar."

The Fox said in a written statement that private events are "distinctly independent of any corporate sponsorship program."

Hosting a private function for Qatar Airways "was in no way a violation of our contractual agreement with Delta," according to the Fox. "As we are not in tune with the industry politics of our sponsors, we are disheartened to learn that Delta has chosen to penalize the Fox Theatre for our decision to rent the venue to another airline."

Delta found out about the party by seeing an invitation for the event, according to executives.

"We felt that, you know, a real friend would have contacted us and had a conversation with us, and so we thought it was time for us to re-evaluate that relationship. And so we won't be supporting the Fox going forward," Carter said. "We were disappointed that we didn't get a phone call, because I think a phone call would have probably prevented the whole thing."